

Message Text

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17

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8894

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3369

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV PINS ES SHUM

SUBJ: AFTEREFFECTS OF JULY 30 CLASH WITH STUDENTS CONTINUE

REF: SAN SALVADOR 3249 AND PREVIOUS

1. EVENTS AND RUMORS CONTINUE TO TUMBLE OUT OF THE DELICATE POLITICAL

ENVIRONMENT CAUSED BY THE HARSH GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED ENDING OF A STUDENT PROTEST MARCH ON JULY 30, ALTHOUGH THE HIGH TENSION OF LAST WEEK HAS ABATED SOMEWHAT. SOME RUMORS CONCERN COPU PLOTTING (AS THE ONE DESCRIBED IN IR 6 829 0080 75), WHILE THE MORE IMAGINATIVE ONES DEAL WITH PURPORTED PLANS BY THE GOES TO IMPOSE A STATE OF SEIGE IF THE STUDENTS ARE SUCCESSFUL IN RALLYING MASSIVE SUPPORT TO THEIR CAUSE. AS DESCRIBED IN THE REFTEL AND SAN SALVADOR 3217, THE PRESIDENT, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND OTHER HIGH GOES OFFICIALS HAVE SPENT A GREAT PORTION OF THE PAST WEEK ATTEMPTING TO GET

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THEIR SIDE OF THE JULY 30 STORY OVER TO IMPORTANT AUDIENCES.

SO FAR THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF THE PRESIDENT SPEAKING TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS (SAN SALVADOR 3217), HIS CABINET AND THE PCN PARTY LEADERSHIP (SAN SALVADOR 3249), VARIOUS MILITARY COMMANDS, AND, LAST FRIDAY, TO THE NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF THE UNION COMUNAL SALVADORENA (UCS). MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS CONNECTED WITH THE EVOLVING SITUATION INCLUDE:

2. STUDENT MEMORIAL PROTEST MARCH - THE SAME UNIVERSITY GROUPS THAT STAGED THE JULY 30 PARADE ORGANIZED AND CARRIED OUT A MASS PROTEST MARCH AND RALLY IN SAN SALVADOR ON AUGUST 14. NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS ESTIMATED THE CROWD AT BETWEEN FOUR AND SIX THOUSAND, MOSTLY UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS BUT WITH A HEALTHY ADMISTURE OF SYMPATHIZERS FROM THE NATIONAL TEACHERS UNION (ANDES), OPPOSITON POLITICAL PARTIES, AND OTHER RELATED GROUPS. ALTHOUGH MANY FEARED THE ERUPTION OF JENEWEED VIOLENCE, PRECIPITATED BY EITHER THE PRESIDENT FOLLOWING THROUGH ON HIS THREAT TO CLAMP DOWN HARD ON ANY ILLEGAL DEMONSTRATION (SAN SALVADOR 3079) OR THE STUDENTS' ANGER, THE WHOLE AFFAIR WENT OFF IN A REMARKABLY PACIFIC MANNER. EVEN THOUGH THE MARCHERS BLOCKED OFF THE MAIN DOWNTOWN STREET DURING THE EVENING RUSH HOUR TO PARADE FROM ONE PLAZA TO ANOTHER, AND HELD A RALLY IN WHICH SPEAKER AFTER SPEAKER VIOLENTLY DENOUNCED THE MOLINA GOVERNMENT, NOTHING WAS DONE BY GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES TO INTERFERE. THERE WERE, IN FACT, NON UNIFORMED FORCES IN EVIDENCE ANYWHERE NEAR THE MARCH.

3. POLICE STUMBLE ON TERRORIST CELL - THE NATIONAL POLICE UNEXPECTEDLY UNCOVERED WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A BONA FIDE TERRORIST CELL DURING THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF SATURDAY AUGUST 16. WHILE ROUTINELY INVESTIGATING AN EXPLOSION IN A HOME IN THE SANTA CRISTINA SECTION OF SAN SALVADOR, THE POLICE RAN INTO ARMED RESISTANCE FROM THOSE WITHIN THE HOUSE. IN THE ENSUING FIREFIGHT, TWO TERRORISTS (A STUDENT OF ECONOMICS AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND HIS WIFE, ALSO A UES STUDENT) WERE KILLED. THE POLICE CLAIMED THREE OF THEIR MEN SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. FOUR OCCUPANTS OF THE HOUSE REPORTEDLY ESCAPED. THE ORIGINAL EXPLOSIONS WERE THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY ACCIDENTAL DETONATIONS OF HOME MADE BOMBS. THE POLICE CLAIM TO HAVE FOUND A CACHE OF WEAPONS, A MULTITUDE OF DISGUISE MATERIALS, FALSE DOCUMENTS, STOLEN UNIFORMS, POLICE BADGES, AND MONIES. FIRST CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORTS SAID THAT ONE SUSPECT WAS CAPTURED, BUT EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM OR DENY THIS. NO LINKAGE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE OCCUPANTS OF THIS HOUSE AND A SPECIFIC TERRORIST GROUP, OR WITH THE EVENTS OF JULY 30.

4. PLANNED GENERAL WORK STOPPAGES - AGEUS, THE UNIVERSITY GROUP THAT ORGANIZED THE JULY 30 MARCH, AND AFFILIATED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS, TRIED TO PUT TOGETHER A SERIES OF WORK STOPPAGES

IN SAN SALVADOR AND SANTA ANA BEGINNING ON AUGUST 19. THE ORGANIZORS CALLED ON THE LABOR MOVEMENT, CAPEINOS, AND OTHERS TO BEGIN A SERIES OF INTERRUPTIONS WHICH WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO A GENERAL STRIKE. IT WAS APPARENT THAT, DESPITE RUMORS THAT THE SAN SALVADOR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM WOULD BE PARALYZED THE FIRST DAY FORCING OTHERS TO JOIN IN, NO ONE BESIDES THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES WERE PREPARED TO WALK OUT. THE RESULT WAS A COMPLETE NON-EVENT WHICH NEVERTHELESS GENERATED STORIES THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO DECLARE MARTIAL LAW IN RESPONSE TO A GENERAL STRIKE.

5. PRESIDENT BRIEFS UCS - THE PRESIDENT AND MOD ROMERO GAVE A TWO-AND-A-HALF HOUR BRIEFING TO THE DIRECTORY OF THE UCS ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 15. THEY DID SO IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR SUCH A DISCUSSION BY THE UCS (UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO PUBLICLY DENOUNCE THE JULY 30 KILLINGS). THE PRESIDENT RESTATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO WORK WITH THE UCS, EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION THAT IT HAD NOT ENTERED THE POLEMIC OVER RECENT POLITICAL EVENTS, AND THEN GAVE HIS DETAILED SUMMARY OF WHAT HAPPENED ON JULY 30. THE STORY WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS THAT PRESENTED TO THE OTHER AUDIENCES. AFTERWARDS THE PRESIDENT SOLICITED QUESTIONS TO "RESOLVE ANY DOUBTS". THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WERE REPORTEDLY FRANKER THAN THOSE GENERATED IN THE OTHER MEETINGS, BUT THE PRESIDENT STUCK TO HIS STORY. THE CAMPESINOS LEFT WITH CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM THAT THEY HAD BEEN TOLD THE WHOLE TRUTH.

6. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY INVESTIGATION - THE OPPOSITION COALITION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS REPEATEDLY DEMANDED THAT A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION BE FORMED TO DETERMINE THE FACTS OF THE JULY 30 CLASH. THE OPPOSITION DEMAND FOR A PUBLIC AIRING BECAME MORE INSISTENT AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S AUGUST 1 SPEECH ACCUSED THE PDC, MNR AND UDN PARTIES OF PARTICIPATING IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSPIRACY THAT LED TO THE EVENTS OF JULY 30. (SAN SALVADOR 3079) PAID ADS IN THE PRESS STATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE MADE TO PRESENT ITS "EVIDENCE" OF SUCH A PLOT FOR PUBLIC EXAMINATION AND DEBATE. THE GOVERNMENT PARTY (PCN) DEPUTIES COUNTERED WITH A PROPOSAL FOR A LEGISLATIVE INQUIRY THAT WOULD GO BEYOND THE JULY 30 INCIDENT AND INVESTIGATE ALL ACTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM SINCE JULY 1972. SINCE THE PCN HAS THE VOTES, THE ASSEMBLY DECIDED ON THE LATTER COURSE. THE ASSEMBLY'S FIRST ACTION WAS TO SEND A PETITION TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE ON AUGUST 13 FOR A COMPLETE REPORT ON "ALL VIOLENT ACTS OF A POLITICAL NATURE, OR CONNECTED WITH THESE, SUCH AS ASSAULTS, KIDNAPPINGS, AMBUSHES, ASSASSINATIONS, ARMED CONFRONTATIONS IN MANIFESTATIONS AND DAMAGE TO STATE OR PRIVATE PROPERTIES " SINCE JULY 1972.

7. COMMENT: - THE GOES HAS OBVIOUSLY HAD TO DEVOTE A GREAT DEAL OF ITS TIME AND ATTENTION SINCE JULY 30 TRYING TO EXPLAIN ITS OVERREACTION TO THE STUDENTS' MARCH. THE GOVERNMENT BY NOW HAS A WELL REHEARSED AND HEAVILY DETAILED ACCOUNT OF WHY IT HAD TO ACT AS IT DID. THERE IS NO WAY OF DETERMINING HOW SUCCESSFUL THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IN CONVINCING THE SPECIFIC AUDIENCES THE PRESIDENT ADDRESSED OR THE NATION BEYOND, OF THE TRUTHFULNESS OF ITS VERSION. THE GOVERNMENT'S NON-REACTION TO THE SECOND STUDENT MARCH COULD IN PART BE EXPLAINED BY ITS NOT WANTING TO HAVE TO GO THROUGH ANOTHER ROUND OF EXPLANATIONS, AS WELL AS ITS BELATED REALIZATION THAT NOT ONLY OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME WERE SHOCKED BY THE STUDENT DEATHS.
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